House Committee Markup: Preparation

Updated March 13, 2007

Summary

Markups provide Members on a committee an opportunity to change parts of a bill prior to its consideration by the full House. A number of administrative, procedural, and substantive steps must be undertaken in preparation for a markup, and other steps could or should be undertaken. Generally, the markup should be strategically planned to minimize controversy, provide Members with political dividends, and position the committee for future action.

The information provided here is not comprehensive, nor is every item needed in every case. Rather, this report is intended as a guide for various tasks that could be accomplished by committee staff in order to prepare a smooth committee markup. Some of the tasks are required by House rules or individual committee rules. Others are a matter of practice. Some of the preparatory work is handled primarily by majority committee staff (such as the administrative tasks), while other tasks are done independently by committee staff of both parties. Also, personal staff of committee members often prepare specialized packets for their Members to use in the committee markup.

The following checklist, one of a series on legislative process, is generally applicable in full committee markup, although much of it also applies to a subcommittee markup.

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Informational Preparation

- Compile background material for Members on the committee, including a summary of the measure to be marked up and summaries of hearing testimony. Packets also usually include information provided by the subcommittee, including details of subcommittee action.
- Hold briefings for legislative assistants of committee members prior to the committee meeting to review the bill, discuss possible amendments, and provide opportunities for questions. These briefings can be held for one party only or both parties together.
- Prepare advocacy material and talking points on possible amendments and the measure to be marked up.

Political Preparation

- Work with "key constituents" and advocacy groups
- Discuss with the administration, if desirable, and Senate sponsors
- Develop plan to work with the press

Chairman's Preparation

- Meet with chairman to review markup vehicle and potential amendments
- Draft opening statement
- Draft procedural script and have available scripts for motions that may be used
- Meet with members of party to discuss procedural and political strategy prior to markup

Procedural Preparation

- Comply with committee rules' notification requirements
- Compile amendment roster

- Prepare script for possible procedural motions and determine Member to make such motions
- Determine Member schedules to ensure attendance at markup and determine where they can be reached if their presence is needed in the committee. (Each party does this for its own Members. Quorum requirements differ among committees, although a majority must be physically present to report a measure from committee.)

Administrative Preparation

- Reserve committee room
- Set up room, including identifying reserved seating, filling water pitchers, and getting ice
- Schedule Capitol Police
- Schedule official reporter
- Schedule legislative counsel
- Notify administration, especially if a representative is to be present; determine if the representative will be at the witness table or in the audience
- Duplicate appropriate copies of markup materials for Members
- Distribute markup packets both prior to the markup and in the session. (Some committees have majority staff do this for all Members; others provide the information to the minority staff so that they can distribute to their Members)
- Prepare voting sheets
- Determine dais staff and witness-table staff, and prepare name placards
- Distribute official notification; when this must be provided, and what information must be included, is determined by individual committee rules.

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